

Clifford Says He's Innocent In BCCI Case

By W. DALE NELSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Washington patriarch Clark M. Clifford, described as in such poor health that he may not live long, pictured himself as an innocent victim of the BCCI banking scandal Thursday. He vowed to fight charges against him "as long as I have the strength and health to do it."

Clifford, 85, a former secretary of defense and a confidant of Democratic presidents, told reporters, "I did not know I was being made a victim, like so many others," by the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

"We accepted them for what they appeared to be," he said. "We were deceived. They were not what they appeared to be."

Clifford and his law partner, Robert Altman, 45, were charged by a New York state grand jury Wednesday with receiving millions in BCCI bribes and deceiving regulators about BCCI's secret control of First American Bankshares Inc., a Washington bank in which they were executives.

A related federal indictment in Washington also accused Clifford and Altman of misleading regulators about BCCI's role in First American and their stock ownership in First American's parent.



Associated Press

WEARY: Clark Clifford wipes his eyes during a news conference.

The two defendants and a lawyer representing them, Carl S. Rauh, asked for a prompt trial. Rauh said Clifford hopes for a trial in Washington. All three declined to answer questions.

Rauh said Clifford has heart disease and other infirmities and takes medication including nitroglycerin

for angina attacks.

"As is obvious from Mr. Clifford's age and serious medical condition, his doctors indicate he may not live very long," Rauh said. "Open heart coronary bypass surgery is being considered, although it is clearly risky with someone as elderly as Mr. Clifford."

Judge Appointed To Hear Challenge

By JAN SKUTCH
Staff Writer

Superior Court Judge A. Blenn Taylor of Brunswick was appointed Thursday to hear a challenge by unsuccessful candidate Constance L. Thomas to the July 21 non-partisan judge race.

A hearing on the suit is anticipated next month, First District Court Administrator Danny DeLoach said.

Thomas, who finished second in the three-candidate race for Chatham County Superior Court judge, sued the Chatham County Elections Board on Wednesday. She contends non-partisan judicial ballots were placed in different locations on voting machines.

Black voters supporting her often could not find her name, Thomas' suit contends.

If her suit is successful, Thomas said a new non-partisan election would be held in the Nov. 3 general election.

By law, the local Superior Court judges must remove themselves. Judge Faye S. Martin of Statesboro, who is the new administrative judge for the 22-county circuit, selected the replacement judge.

Former State Court Judge Charles B. Mikell Jr., with 10,821 votes, won the post without a runoff. Thomas, a black attorney, finished second with 4,180 votes and attorney Thomas Taggart finished third with 3,916 votes.

Mikell and Taggart are white. Thomas said Thursday she is seeking fairness in her suit.

"We feel something has to be done to review the ballot," Thomas said during a press conference at the Chatham County Courthouse. "It's a matter of fairness."

Candidates Endorsed For Aug. Runoffs

Staff Reports

Congressional and Chatham County Commission candidates won endorsements from their former opponents Thursday for the Aug. 11 runoffs.

Savannahian John Scardino, who placed fifth of seven candidates in the Democratic Primary for the 1st Congressional seat, endorsed St. Marys educator Barbara Christmas in her runoff against Buddy DeLoach, the former mayor of Hinesville.

The winner faces Savannah Republican Jack Kingston on Nov. 3.

In the 5th District Chatham County Commission race, Clinton Jones announced that he has the support of Yusuf Shabazz and Lonnie Oglesby, who finished fourth and fifth in the five-way race.

Jones and incumbent Deanie Frazier will meet Aug. 11 in the Democratic runoff, with the winner facing no Republican opposition in the fall.

"Hopefully, it would mean that people who voted for them would come to our side," Jones said.

In announcing his endorsement, Scardino said, "If we're going to get a fundamental change in America and in Washington, then Georgia must send the best messenger to Congress to make it so."

Christmas understands that "the American work force is the key to productivity, competitiveness and progress," he said.

The 1st District will "celebrate Christmas before Thanksgiving" this year, Scardino predicted.

POLICE WRAP

Police Nab Alleged Crack Dealer

By AUDREY D. McCOMBS
And TOM ROSE
Staff Writers

Federal and local authorities Thursday afternoon arrested a Savannah man once identified as a major crack cocaine dealer.

Stanley Smart, 21, of the 800 block of East Henry Street, jumped from rooftop to rooftop trying to avoid police looking for him at his home. He finally gave up and climbed down to the officers, who arrested him on an outstanding contempt of court warrant.

The warrant stems from March charges filed against Smart for possession of two stolen handguns. After Smart failed to appear for his court hearing Wednesday, a judge issued a contempt warrant for his arrest.

When officers arrived at Smart's home at 3 p.m., they talked to his mother. One of the officers noticed Smart hiding behind the chimney on his roof, and the short chase ensued. Officers charged Smart with obstruction because he tried to elude them.

Smart's name first surfaced in 1990 when federal prosecutors seized a house on the city's southside, call-

ing the property the rewards of illegal drug activity by Smart. He has yet to be charged with federal drug violations.

Also Thursday:

■ A two-car collision at a downtown intersection Thursday night left Savannah police Detective Freddie Praylo with neck and leg injuries.

Praylo was traveling south on Whitaker Street shortly before 10 p.m. when another car pulled into his path from Bryan Street. Praylo was unable to stop in time to avoid the collision, police said.

The driver of the car, Rene J. Moret of Saraland, Ala., was to be charged with disregarding a stop sign, police said. Other charges are pending against Moret, police said.

Witnesses told police that Moret, who was driving west on Bryan in a rented Hertz 1992 Pontiac Grand AM, did not break for the stop sign at Bryan and Whitaker.

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